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ROMANS 14

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS[4]	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Do Not Judge Your Brother	The Law of Liberty	Love Respects the Scruples of Others	Do Not Judge Others	Charity Toward the Scrupulous
14:1-12	14:1-13	14:1-4	14:1-4	14:1-12
		14:5-6	14:5-12	
		14:7-9		
		14:10-12		
(11)	(11)	(11)	(11)	
Do Not Make Your Brother Stumble	The Law of Love		Do Not Make Others Fall	
14:13-23		14:13-23	14:13-18	14:13-21
	14:14-23			
			14:19-23	
				(14:22-15:6)
				14:22-23

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS ON ROMANS 14:1-12

A. This chapter tries to balance the paradox of Christian freedom and Christian responsibility. The literary unit runs through Rom. 15:13. For a good brief summary of the literary unit, see Contextual Insights to Romans 15, C.

B. The problem which precipitated this chapter was probably the tension between Gentile and Jewish believers in the church of Rome (or possibly Paul's current experience in Corinth, cf. 1 Corinthians 8-10). Before conversion the Jews tended to be legalistic and the pagans tended to be immoral. Remember, this chapter is addressed to sincere followers of Jesus. This chapter does not address carnal believers (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1). The highest motive is ascribed to both groups. There is danger in the extremes on both sides. This discussion is not a license for nit-picking legalism or flaunting freedom.

Remember that Paul wrote Romans from Corinth. The problem there was a party spirit (which leader was best), but here there were different types of believers (probably Jewish and Gentile).

C. Believers must be careful not to make their theology or ethics the standard for all other believers (cf. 2 Cor. 10:12). All believers must walk in the light they have but understand that their theology is not automatically God's theology. All believers are still affected by sin. We must encourage, exhort, and teach one another from the Scriptures, reason, and experience, but always in love. The more one knows the more one knows he/she does not know (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12)!

D. One's attitude and motives before God are the real keys in evaluating other believers' actions. Christians will stand before Christ to be judged on how they treated one another (cf. Rom. 14:10,12 and 2 Cor. 5:10) and others (cf. Matt. 25:31-46).

E. Martin Luther said, "A Christian man is a most free Lord of all, subject to none; the Christian man is a most dutiful servant of all, subject to all." Biblical truth is often presented in a tension-filled paradox.
SPECIAL TOPIC: EASTERN LITERATURE

F. This difficult but crucial subject is dealt with
1. in the entire literary unit of Romans 14:1-15:13
2. in 1 Corinthians 8-10
3. in Colossians 2:8-23
4. A helpful book for me in this area is Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 75-86.

G. However, it needs to be stated that pluralism among sincere believers is not a bad thing. Each believer has strengths and weaknesses. Each must walk in the light he/she has, always open to the Spirit and the Bible for more light. In this period of seeing through a glass darkly (1 Cor. 13:8-13) one must walk in love (Rom. 14:15) and peace (Rom. 14:17,19) for mutual edification.

Differences among believers allows them to reach different groups, personalities for Christ.

H. The titles "stronger" and "weaker" which Paul gives to these groups prejudices them to us. This was certainly not Paul's intent. Both groups were sincere believers. We are not to attempt to mold other Christians into ourselves! We accept one another in Christ!

I think the key to understanding this literary unit is the tension in the Roman church between believing Jews and Gentiles.

I. The entire argument could be outlined as
1. accept one another because God accepts us in Christ (cf. Rom. 14:1,3; 15:7)
2. do not judge one another because Christ is our only Master and Judge (cf. Rom. 14:3-12)
3. love is more important than personal freedom (cf. Rom. 14:13-23)

4. follow Christ's example and lay down your rights for others' edification and good (cf. Rom. 15:1-13; 1 John 3:16).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 14:1-4

[1]Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but* not for *the purpose of* passing judgment on his opinions. [2]One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables *only*. [3]The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. [4]Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

14:1

NASB	**"Now accept"**
NKJV	**"Receive"**
NRSV, TEV	**"Welcome"**
NJB	**"Give a welcome"**
REB	**"Accept anyone"**
Peshitta	**"Assist him"**

This is a PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE (cf. Rom. 15:1). This is an ongoing command with emphasis on the subject. The PRONOUN "you" is in the Greek VERB, but is implied in English and refers to "strong" Christians (cf. Rom. 15:1). This implies two groups in the church at Rome. This may have related to

1. the tension between believing Jews and Gentiles (cf. Rom. 15:7-21)
2. differing personality types
3. different cultural traditions

This whole context is dealing with true, sincere believers; some strong, some weak in their faith. Faith is used here in the sense of the understanding of the gospel and its radically new and freeing implications for daily life.

▣

NASB, NKJV	**"the one who is weak in faith"**
NRSV, TEV, REB	**"those who are weak in faith"**
NJB	**"If a aperson's faith is not strong enough"**
Peshitta	**"who is weak in the faith"**

This phrase is emphasized by being fronted (i.e., put first in the Greek text). Literally it is "weak in faith." The PRESENT TENSE focuses on the fact that it is a lifestyle characteristic. This refers to

1. a legalistic mindset
2. the over scrupulous Christian believer is described in this chapter in three ways:
    a. prohibitions of food (cf. Rom. 14:2,6,21)
    b. emphasis on special days (cf. Rom. 14:5-6)
    c. prohibition of wine (cf. Rom. 14:17,21)

This same type of person was mentioned in Rom. 15:1 and 1 Cor. 8:9-13; 9:22. Be careful not to categorize yourself too quickly as a "strong" or "weak" Christian. Often believers are weak in one area and strong in another.

Paul's attitude toward these matters is very different in Gal. 4:9-10 and Col. 2:16-23. These texts reflect the attitudes and teachings of false teachers. In Romans these are sincere believers who have over-scrupulous consciences.

Many commentators think the "weak in faith" refers to Jewish believers (i.e., Judaizers) and their continuing emphasis on obedience to the Mosaic Law as understood in rabbinical traditions (i.e., Talmud). This surely fits a. and b. in paragraph one, but it does not fit c. For this reason I think a certain personality type better fits the context. It may refer to Jewish or Gentile believers whose past traditions and lifestyles hold powerful sway!

SPECIAL TOPIC: WEAKNESS

▣

NASB	**"*but* not for *the purpose of* passing judgment on his opinions"**
NKJV	**"but not to dispute over doubtful things"**
NRSV	**"but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions"**
TEV	**"but do not argue with them about their personal opinions"**
NJB	**"without starting an argument"**
REB	**"without debate about his misgivings"**
Peshitta	**"do not waver in your reasoning"**

Believers must fully accept other believers with whom they disagree without trying to change them! This demands freedom of conscience as the basis of fellowship, not an imposed uniformity. All believers are in process. They must give the Spirit time to work and mold each into maturity, but even in maturity, they will not all agree!

14:2 The diet referred to in this verse is for religious purposes, not health. This food problem arose from two possible sources

1. Jewish food laws (cf. Leviticus 11)
2. meat sacrificed to pagan idols (cf. 1 Corinthians 8-10)

Jesus clearly taught that food is not what defiles a person (cf. Matt. 15:10-20; Mark 7:14-23). This truth is illustrated by Peter's vision concerning Cornelius in Acts 10.

SPECIAL TOPIC: OT FOOD LAWS

14:3 "The one who eats is not to regard with contempt" "Not to regard with contempt" is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE of *ezoutheneō* with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means stop an act already in process.

"Contempt" is literally "to make light of," "set at naught," or "count as worthless" (cf. Rom. 14:10; Luke 18:9; 1 Cor. 6:4; 16:11; 2 Cor. 10:10; Gal. 4:14; 1 Thess. 5:20). Believers must guard against a condescending self-righteousness. The strong in faith must not condemn the weak in faith; and "the weak" must not act as self-righteous, superior judges.

▣ **"judge"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means stop an act already in process. The weak in faith must stop passing judgment on the actions of their brothers/sisters who disagree with them.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SHOULD CHRISTIANS JUDGE ONE ANOTHER?

▣ **"for God has accepted him"** This is an AORIST MIDDLE INDICATIVE. This same term is translated "receive" in Rom. 14:1. The basis for believers accepting each other is that God through Christ (Rom. 15:7) has accepted them. In context Rom. 14:3 is speaking directly to the over scrupulous, the Christian weak in faith.

14:4 "Who are you" This is emphatic in Greek, referring to the weak brother andsister.

▣ **"the servant"** This is the term *oiketēs*, which is formed from the term *oikos*, which means "house," therefore, this is a home slave or servant (cf. Luke 16:13; Acts 10:7; Rom. 14:4; 1 Pet. 2:18). It is used in this sense in the Septuagint (cf. Gen. 9:25; 27:37; 44:16,33; 50:18). It is not used as the predominate term for slave or servant in the NT, which is *doulos*, which could also denote home servants or slaves.

Paul's argument here is that each believer is a slave/servant of Christ. He is their "lord" and He and He alone will direct them and hold them accountable for their actions and motives (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10).

▣ **"To his own master he stands or falls"** In context Paul is addressing the over scrupulous, but the statement obviously could refer to both groups. Believers would do better getting the splinters out of their own eyes (cf. Matt. 7:1-15).

▣ **"and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand"** This was a wonderful promise (cf. Rom. 5:1-2; Jude 24-25). It also involves each believer's cooperation (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-2).
SPECIAL TOPIC: STAND

There is a Greek manuscript variation at this point. The NKJV, following the uncial manuscripts D, F, G, 048 and 0150, as well as the Vulgate, has "God" (*Theos*), however, MSS P^{46}, ℵ, A, B, C, P have "Lord" (*kurios*). The UBS^4 rates "Lord" as certain (A).

SPECIAL TOPIC: TEXTUAL CRITICISM

SPECIAL TOPIC: LORD (*adon* and *kurios*)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 14:5-9

5One person regards one day above another, another regards every day *alike*. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. 6He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. 7For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. 9For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

14:5 "One person regards one day above another" Some believers are still very calendar conscious concerning religion (i.e., certain days, certain times, or annual events, cf. Gal. 4:10; Col. 2:16-17). All days belong to God equally. There are no special days. There is no "secular" versus "sacred." Everything is sacred!

▣ **"Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind"** This is a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE. This is the key to peace in this area. Believers' personal convictions are priority for their actions (cf. Rom. 14:23), but not for all other believers. God does not live in "my" theological box. My theology is not necessarily God's!

SPECIAL TOPIC: CONSCIENCE

14:6 "for the Lord" This DATIVE phrase is used three times in Rom. 14:6 and twice in Rom. 14:8. All lifestyle choices by sincere believers need to be made as "unto the Lord" (cf. Eph. 6:7 and Col. 3:23), not just personal preferences, denominational or family traditions, or opinions!

SPECIAL TOPIC: LORD (*adon* and *kurios*)

14:7 "for not one of us lives for himself" No Christian is an island. Christians live first and foremost for Christ (cf. Rom. 14:8). Believers' actions affect others. They are part of a large spiritual family. Therefore, they must limit their personal freedom in love (cf. 1 Cor. 10:24,27-33). They must allow others to grow in their personal freedom. Legalism leads to self-righteous uniformity which is not of God. Jesus' harshest words and condemnations were directed toward the self-righteous Pharisees.

14:8 "if. . .if" These are two THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES which mean possible future action. Believers serve the Lord in all and every possible contingency (cf. Eph. 6:7; Col. 3:23)!

14:9 "Lord of both the dead and of the living" This is an unusual ordering of these terms. Their order may reflect Jesus' death and resurrection. He is now Sovereign of both realms.

This truth forms the theological reason why Christians must live not for themselves, but also for other believers. They are not their own; they have been bought with a price (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19-20). They are servants of Jesus, who died for their sin that they might no longer be a slave to sin, but to God (cf. Romans 6). Believers are to emulate Jesus' life of loving service by dying to their self-centered desires (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 3:16).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 14:10-12

10But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11For it is written,

"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me,

And every tongue shall give praise to God."

12So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

14:10 "But you" This is fronted for emphasis.

▣ The two questions of Rom. 14:10 are the focus of Rom. 14:1-12. The two groups referred to in Rom. 14:3 are again contrasted. One group "judges," the other group regards "with contempt." Both attitudes are inappropriate for "slaves!" Their master, Jesus Christ, is the only One who has the right to "criticize" or "look down on." For believers to act as judge

1. usurps God's place
2. is preliminary and incomplete

▣ **"we will all stand before the judgment seat of God"** This same truth is expressed in 2 Cor. 5:10. Believers will explain to the Lord how they treated one another. Jesus will act as divine Judge (cf. Matt. 25:31-46).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

The NKJV has "the judgment seat of Christ." The Greek manuscripts that support the KJV are the early correctors of the ancient uncial Greek manuscripts א^2, and C^2. *Theos* is in MSS א, B, C, D, F and G. Christian scribes probably changed the Greek text to conform to 2 Cor. 5:10. It is also possible that the scribes changed this verse to oppose the early view of Christ called "adoptionism." There are several textual variants that seem to have been made to make the text more orthodox. The UBS^4 gives *Theos* a "B" rating (almost certain).

14:11 "For it is written" This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. This was a specialized Hebrew idiom that was used to describe inspired OT quotes. This is an allusion to Isa. 45:23, which is also quoted in Phil. 2:10-11.

▣ **"As I live"** This is an oath formula which is a word play on the Covenant name for God, YHWH (English LORD, which is a form of the Hebrew VERB "to be" (cf. Exod. 3:14). He is the ever-living, only-living God. Therefore, He is swearing by His own existence.

SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY, D.

▣ **"Praise"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: CONFESSION/PROFESSION

14:12 "So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God" Christians will be judged (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10), and criticizing brothers will be part of that experience. Some ancient Greek manuscripts omit "to God." It is obviously implied by the context. This variant may have been influenced by the variant in Rom. 14:10. The UBS^4 gives its inclusion (i.e., MSS א, A, C, D) a "C" rating. The translation committee could not decide which variant was original.

SPECIAL TOPIC: JUDGMENT IN THE NT

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS ON ROMANS 14:13-23

A. The subject of how Christians should treat each other begun in Rom. 14:1-12 is based on the truth that they are to fully accept all types of Christians. The reason is because Christ, who is their only master and judge, fully accepts both groups. Often spiritual things that are significant to one group because of their past, their personality type, their parents, their personal preferences, their experiences, etc. are not significant to God or to other believers.

B. This second section of the discussion of Christian freedom and responsibility develops the subject from a different point of view. In these verses it is the believer's love for God, in Christ, that motivated him/her to love fellow Christians. As Jesus laid down His life for believers, they are to lay down their freedom for those (i.e., other believers) for whom He died (cf. 2 Cor. 5:13-14; 1 John 3:16). This emphasis on love as the basic motive of the Christian life is also seen in Rom. 13:8-10 in believer's relations with non-believers.

C. The truth that all things in the physical world are "clean" is very difficult for some Christians to accept. Often even believers place the blame for sin on "things" instead of themselves (e.g., "demon rum"). Paul states repeatedly that all things are "clean" (cf. Rom. 14:14,20; 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:25-26; 1 Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:15). His statements follow Jesus' teachings about food in Mark 7:18-23. Clean and unclean food is used as an illustration to Peter of God's acceptance of Cornelius in Acts 10:15.
SPECIAL TOPIC: OT FOOD LAWS

D. This section is primarily addressed to the "stronger brother." Paul concedes the half-truth of the statement that "all things are clean," but adds that all things do not build up or edify the family of God (cf. 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23). The strong brother's freedom can devastate other Christians. Believers are their fellow believers' keepers, through Christ and for Christ.

E. It is very interesting that Paul does not state or imply that the "weaker brother" is in a spiritual process which will lead to becoming a "strong brother." This whole discussion does not address growing in grace, but the priority of love between differing Christian understandings. Believers' inclusion in one of the two groups is based more on personality type, religious training, and personal experiences than "right" or "wrong." The believer's task is not changing others but loving and respecting the other group. It is an issue of the heart, not the mind. God loves, accepts and gave His Son for all mankind, for both groups.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 14:13-23

[13]Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this-not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. [14]I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. [15]For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. [16]Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; [17]for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. [18]For he who in this *way* serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. [19]So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. [20]Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. [21]It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or *to do anything* by which your brother stumbles. [22]The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. [23]But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *his eating is* not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

14:13 "let us not judge one another" This is a PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which implies stopping an act already in process. This is not a warning but a prohibition! This is very similar to Rom. 14:16. The term "judge" has already been used 5 times by Paul in Rom. 14:1-12 and now four more times in Rom. 14:13-23.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SHOULD CHRISTIANS JUDGE ONE ANOTHER?

▣ **"not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INFINITIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which implied the stopping of an act already in process. The same truth is stated in Rom. 14:21 and 1 Cor. 8:9.

The term "obstacle" referred to something in the road that causes one to stumble. The term "stumbling block" literally refers to a triggering mechanism on a baited animal trap.

There is a corporate aspect to Christianity. We are our fellow believers' keeper, encourager, and friend. Faith is family!

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRISTIANITY IS CORPORATE

14:14

NASB	**"I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus"**
NKJV	**"I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus"**
NRSV	**"I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus"**
TEV	**"My union with the Lord Jesus makes me certain"**
NJB	**"Now I am perfectly well aware, of course, and I speak for the Lord Jesus"**
REB	**"All that I know of the Lord Jesus convinces me"**
Peshitta	**"For I know and have confidence in the Lord Jesus"**

This is a PERFECT ACTIVE form of *oida,* which was used in the sense of a PRESENT TENSE along with a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. Literally it means, "I continue to know and have been and continue to be convinced." This is a restatement of the truth in Rom. 14:5b and 22-23.

Believers' understanding of spiritual things comes from their relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit. They must live in the light they have.

▣ **"that nothing is unclean in itself"** This same truth is illustrated in Acts 10:9-16. Things are not evil, people are evil. Nothing in creation is evil in and of itself (cf. Rom. 14:14,20; Mark 7:18-23; 1 Cor. 10:14-15; 1 Tim. 4:4 and Titus 1:15)!

▣ **"but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean"** This phrase meant unclean in a religious sense. Believers must evaluate their actions by their consciences (cf. Rom. 14:5,22-23). Even if they are misinformed about an issue or action, they must walk in the light they have before God. They, also, must not judge other believers by their light, especially in ambiguous areas (cf. Rom. 14:1,3,4,10,13).

SPECIAL TOPIC: CONSCIENCE

14:15 "For if because of food your brother is hurt" This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Love, not rights; responsibility, not freedom determines our lifestyle.

This either relates to (1) Jewish food laws (cf. Lev. 11) or (2) meat sacrificed to idols (cf. 1 Cor. 8-10). Verse 20 expresses this truth so clearly.

SPECIAL TOPIC: OT FOOD LAWS

▣ **"you are no longer walking according to love"** This is often called

1. "the law of liberty" (cf. James 1:25; 3:12)
2. "the royal law" (cf. James 2:8)
3. "the law of Christ" (cf. Gal. 6:2)

There are New Covenant responsibilities and guidelines (i.e., "yoke" in Matt. 11:29-30)!

▣

NASB, NKJV	**"Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died"**
NRSV	**"Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died"**
TEV, REB	**"Do not let the food that you eat ruin the person for whom Christ died"**
NJB	**"You are certainly not free to eat what you like if that means the downfall of someone for whom Christ died"**
Peshitta	**"Do not make food a cause to destroy a man for whose sake Christ died"**

This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means stop an act already in process. This is a very strong phrase. The freedom of some Christians should not cause the destruction of other Christians! This does not refer to a loss of salvation, but the loss of peace, assurance, and effective ministry. See F. F. Bruce, *Answers To Questions*, pp. 88-89.

The term "destroy" is the Greek word *lupeō*, which means "to cause grief, sorrow, or pain" (same in the LXX). Paul uses this word mostly in 2 Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor. 2:2,4,5; 6:10; 7:8,9,11). "Destroy" is too strong a translation. This does not refer to the loss of salvation, but the conviction of the Holy Spirit over violating one's personal convictions. If the believer's actions do not issue from faith they are sin (cf. Rom. 14:23).

14:16

NASB	**"do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil"**

NKJV, NRSV	**"do not let your good be spoken of as evil"**
TEV	**"do not let what you regard as good get a bad name"**
NJB	**"you must not compromise your privilege"**
REB	**"you must not let what you think about be brought into disrepute"**
Peshitta	**"let not our blessings be a reproach to anyone"**

This is a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which meant stop an act already in process. Freedom can easily turn into license!

This "good thing" in this verse refers to the actions of the strong believer. If a strong Christian acts on his/her freedom in such a way that weak believers are negatively affected and spiritually damaged, the "good thing" becomes an opportunity for the evil one!

This verse seems to change the focus from how Christians treat each other to possibly a concern for non-believers (cf. Rom. 14:18b). The VERB is from the word "blasphemy" (spoken) which is usually used of unbelievers.

14:17 "the kingdom of God" This is the only use of this phrase in Romans. It is a frequent topic of Jesus. It is a reality here and now as well as a future consummation (cf. Matt. 6:10).

The corporate life of the body of Christ is more valuable than the exercise of personal freedoms!

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

▣ **"but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"** It is the Spirit who gives these qualities to the individual believers and the believing community. These are the characteristics of God's family, external and internal.

The term "righteousness" is used here by Paul in a specialized sense. Usually for him it describes imputed righteousness, a legal (forensic) declaration by God of the believer's forgiveness and standing in Christ (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; 4). Sinful humanity is not only counted as righteous, they are to become righteous. It is both a gift and a goal, INDICATIVE and IMPERATIVE, an act of faith and a life of faith!

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PERSONHOOD OF THE SPIRIT

SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

SPECIAL TOPIC: SANCTIFICATION

14:18 Believers self-limiting their freedoms for the sake of weaker believers is a service to Christ Himself. There is no stronger way to affirm our love for Jesus than loving, caring, and protecting those for whom He died.

▣ **"approved by men"** This may be a way of asserting that the Christian's love for one another may open the door of ministry and witness to the unbelieving community (cf. Rom. 14:16; 2 Cor. 8:21; 1 Pet. 2:12). How we treat one another within the community of faith is a powerful witness, either positively or negatively, to the unbelieving community.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK TERMS FOR TESTING, #1

14:19 "let us pursue" This term, *diōkō*, an OT idiom common in the Septuagint and also common in Paul's writings, means "to follow eagerly" or "endeavor earnestly to acquire." Paul uses this word in Rom. 9:30,31; 12:13; and here in the sense of "pursue," but in Rom. 12:14 for those who persecute believers (cf. 1 Cor. 4:12; even of himself, 15:9; 2 Cor. 4:9; Gal. 1:13,23; Phil. 3:6).

This is either a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE (MSS א, A, B, F, G, L & P) or a PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE (MSS C, D) used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. The UBS^4 puts the SUBJUNCTIVE in its text, but gives it a "D" rating (with great difficulty deciding which is original).

Notice the things Christians should pursue.

1. hospitality, Rom. 12:13
2. the things that make for peace and the building up of one another, Rom. 14:19
3. love, 1 Cor. 14:1
4. Christlikeness, Phil. 3:12,14
5. what is good for one another and for all men, 1 Thess. 5:15
6. righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness, 1 Tim. 6:11
7. righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart, 2 Tim. 2:22

▣ **"for peace and the building up of one another"** This should be the believer's goal in all things (cf. Ps. 34:14; Heb. 12:14). One's personal freedom and theological understanding must lead to the stability and growth of the body of Christ (cf. Rom. 15:2; 1 Cor. 6:12; 14:26; Eph. 4:12).

SPECIAL TOPIC: PEACE (NT)

SPECIAL TOPIC: EDIFY

14:20 "Do not tear down the work of God" This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means stop an act in progress. This is a strong COMPOUND VERB (*kata* + *luō*). It is used only three times in Paul's writings.

1. 2 Cor. 5:1 for death
2. Gal. 2:18 in the sense here, destroy

There is a play between "build up" in Rom. 14:19 and this word, which literally means "tear down." Both are construction images.

What is "the work of God" in this context? It cannot refer to maturity, but the Spirit's activity in the life of the "weak" believers. No where in this context or 1 Corinthians 8-10 does Paul say one group should help the other group conform or change!

▣ **"all things indeed are clean"** See note at Rom. 14:14.

▣

NASB	**"but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense"**
NKJV, Peshitta	**"but it is evil for the man who eats with offense"**
NRSV	**"but it is wrong for you to make others fall by what you eat"**
TEV	**"but it is wrong to eat anything that will cause someone else to fall into sin"**
NJB	**"but it becomes evil if by eating it you make somebody else fall away"**
REB	**"but it is wrong to eat if by eating you cause another to stumble"**

This verse is the central truth of this Romans (cf. 1 Cor. 10:25-26; Titus 1:15).

This is referring to meat offered to an idol in a pagan temple (cf. 1 Corinthians 8-10). The meat is not good or evil, but if a weak believer, who thinks it is inappropriate, sees another Christian eating it and also eats, that which is morally neutral becomes evil because it violates his/her personal consciousness of the will of God (cf. Rom. 14:23).

Most English translations relate this clause to "the stronger brother" in that by their eating, a weaker believer is influenced. The Catholic translation of New American Bible gives the other option and relates the clause to "the weaker brother," "but it is wrong for a man to eat when the food offends his conscience." In context the first option seems best but the ambiguity may be purposeful and refer to both, as does Rom. 14:22-23.

14:21 This is a word to "the strong brothers." This is the only basis in the Bible for the theological concept of "total abstinence" from certain foods or drinks. Strong Christians must limit their freedom for their Christian brothers/sisters and sincere searchers (lost people). Much of this self-limiting is cultural, regional and/or denominational.

These are two AORIST ACTIVE INFINITIVES with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which implied "never start an act." Some have interpreted these AORISTS as applying only to certain occasions (cf. 1 Corinthians 8-10). Obviously eating and drinking cannot be prohibited.

14:22

NASB "The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemen himself in what he approves"

NKJV "Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves"

NRSV "The faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God. blessed are those who have no reason to condemn themselves because of what they approve"

TEV "Keep what you believe about this matter, then, between yourself and God. Happy are those who do not feel guilty when they do something they judge is right!"

NJB "Hold on to your own belief, as between yourself and God—and consider the man fortunate who can make his decision without going against his conscience."

This is the reaffirmation that believers must live in light of their own Holy Spirit-led, Bible-informed consciences (cf. Rom. 14:5). They must walk in the light they have; but, not so as to abuse a fellow believers' faith. Verse 22 relates to the "stronger brother," while verse 23 relates to the "weaker brother."

Verse 22 starts with a manuscript variation. It can be a question (NKJV) or a statement (NASB, NRSV, TEV, and JB). See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, pp. 532-533. The UBS^4 committee could not decide which form was original.

▣ **"approves"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK TERMS FOR TESTING, #1

14:23 "But he who doubts" This is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE. This refers to the over-scrupulous Christian of Rom. 14:3.

▣ **"is condemned** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE from *kata* + *krinō*, meaning

1. "placed in a guilty light by contrast" (cf. Harold K. Moulton, *The analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, p. 216)
2. "not condemnation, but the punishment following sentence" (cf. Rom. 5:16,18; 8:1 [cf. Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 328])

Here, it refers to the violation of one's conscience and the resulting pain associated with the convicting of the Holy Spirit, not to one's salvation.

▣ **"if he eats"** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE.

▣ **"and whatever is not from faith is sin"** In ambiguous biblical areas, sin is a violation of our conscience, not a violation of law. We must walk in the light we have-always open to more light from the Bible and the Spirit.

Believers' understanding of God's will (the sense of "faith" in this context) must determine their actions. It is possible for mature believers to hold different views on biblically ambiguous issues and both be in the will of God.

▣ Some Greek manuscripts have the doxology of Rom. 16:25-27 at the close of chapter 14. Some have it in both places. One papyri manuscript, P^{46}, has it at the close of Romans 15. There are six different locations of this doxology in the Greek manuscripts' traditions of Romans. For a full discussion consult, *A Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament* by Bruce M. Metzger, published by United Bible Societies, pp. 533-536. Here is a brief summary of the theories.

1. Origen said an early heretic in Rome, Marcion, removed the last two chapters of Romans. This would explain the doxology at Romans 14.
2. Other scholars speculate that Paul wrote one form of Romans to be sent to Rome, Romans 1-14, and later saw a need to send the same letter to Ephesus; Romans 1-16. The long list of personal greetings (Romans 16) reflects Ephesus, not Rome.
3. The greetings of Romans 16 were for believers on the way to Rome because Aquila and Priscilla are in Ephesus and are never recorded as returning to Rome.
4. The doxology was not original and was added by Christian scribes later for liturgical purposes in public worship.

The comment of M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol. 2, is interesting.

> "Against these theories is the stubborn fact that of the known extant MSS of Paul (about three hundred) all the MSS hitherto collated, including all the most important, give these chapters in the received connection and order, with the exception of the doxology" (p. 750).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Describe the "weaker" brother. Does Paul imply they are immature?
2. How does Christian freedom relate to Christian responsibility?
3. Is everything in nature "clean" or morally neutral (Rom. 14:14, 20)?
4. Why was the question of food so important at Corinth (cf. 1 Cor. 8, 10), remember Paul wrote Romans from Corinth?
5. Explain the relationship between knowledge, freedom, and love in this chapter.
6. On what should we base fellowship in the church?
7. On what do we base our individual choices and actions?
8. How do our actions affect others? What does this demand of us?
9. How do we determine proper Christian ethics?
10. Is it possible for mature Christians to disagree and both be acceptable to God?

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